

Claims

What is claimed is:

1. A method for processing a transaction, comprising:
5 determining a purchase price for said transaction, said purchase price including a fractional cost that exceeds a whole-unit amount;
generating a random number; and
rounding said purchase price up or down to a whole-unit amount based on said random number.
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2. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of generating a random number is performed by a third party to said transaction.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of generating a random number
15 is supervised by a third party to said transaction.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of generating a random number further comprises the step of obtaining a seller-generated increment value.
- 20 5. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of generating a random number further comprises the step of obtaining a buyer-provided offset value.
6. The method of claim 1, wherein a buyer commitment to the transaction is obtained by means of currency submitted to a vending machine.
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7. The method of claim 1, wherein a buyer commitment to the transaction is obtained by means of currency submitted to a trusted third party prior to the generation of

said random number.

8. The method of claim 5, wherein said buyer-provided offset value is specified by the buyer in response to a query.

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9. The method of claim 5, wherein said buyer-provided offset value is generated from a serial number obtained from paper currency provided by the buyer.

10. The method of claim 5, wherein said buyer-provided offset value is generated from a numeric identifier obtained from a product associated with said transaction.

11. The method of claim 5, wherein the seller generated random number is made without access to said buyer-provided offset value.

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12. A method for processing a transaction, comprising:
determining a purchase price, $N.C$, for said transaction, said purchase price including a fractional cost, p , equal to $C/100$, that exceeds a whole-unit amount, N ;
generating a random number; and
rounding said purchase price up to a price of $N+1$ units with a probability of p and down to a price of N units with a probability of $(1-p)$.

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13. The method of claim 12, wherein said step of generating a random number is performed in a manner that prevents a bias towards a buyer or seller.

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14. The method of claim 12, further comprising the step of obtaining a buyer commitment to the transaction.

15. A method for processing a transaction, comprising:
determining a purchase price, $N.C$, for said transaction, said purchase price including a fractional cost, p , equal to $C/100$, that exceeds a whole-unit amount, N ;
receiving an amount of X units from a buyer, where X is greater than N ;
5 generating a random number; and
rounding said purchase price up to a price of X units with a probability of $((N + p) / X)$ and down to a price of zero units with a probability of $1 - ((N + p) / X)$.
16. The method of claim 15, wherein said step of generating a random number
10 is performed in a manner that prevents a bias towards a buyer or seller.
17. The method of claim 15, further comprising the step of obtaining a buyer commitment to the transaction.
- 15 18. A system for processing a transaction, comprising:
a memory that stores computer-readable code; and
a processor operatively coupled to said memory, said processor configured to implement said computer-readable code, said computer-readable code configured to:
determine a purchase price for said transaction, said purchase price
20 including a fractional cost that exceeds a whole-unit amount;
generate a random number; and
round said purchase price up or down to a whole-unit amount based on said random number.
- 25 19. The system of claim 18, wherein said random number is generated in a manner that prevents a bias towards a buyer or seller.

20. The system of claim 18, wherein said processor is further configured to obtain a buyer commitment to the transaction.

21. The system of claim 18, wherein said purchase price, N.C, for said transaction includes a fractional cost, p, equal to $C/100$, that exceeds a whole-unit amount, N, and said purchase price is rounded up to a price of N+1 units with a probability of p and rounded down to a price of N units with a probability of (1-p).

22. The system of claim 18, wherein said purchase price, N.C, for said transaction includes a fractional cost, p, equal to $C/100$, that exceeds a whole-unit amount, N and wherein an amount of X units is received from a buyer, where X is greater than N, and wherein said purchase price is rounded up to a price of X units with a probability of $((N + p) / X)$ and rounded down to a price of zero units with a probability of $1 - ((N + p) / X)$.

23. An article of manufacture for processing a transaction, comprising:
a computer readable medium having computer readable code means embodied thereon, said computer readable program code means comprising:
a step to determine a purchase price for said transaction, said purchase price including a fractional cost that exceeds a whole-unit amount;
a step to generate a random number; and
a step to round said purchase price up or down to a whole-unit amount based on said random number.